

Testimony Submitted to the Appropriations Committee:

Submitted By: Benjamin Davies, Manager of Advocacy & Outreach, MARC Community Resources

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Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Benjamin Davies and I am the Manager of Advocacy & Outreach at MARC Community Resources in Middletown. I have been a professional in the human service industry for over 10 years. While I can honestly say I love my job and cherish the relationships I've made with other professionals, families, advocates and most importantly the individuals we serve, this industry is in a dire situation with regards to its budget. Sadly provider agencies, individuals receiving services and their families have seen nothing but cuts for the last decade.

Clearly individuals receiving services are of the utmost importance; however, I'd like to briefly speak on behalf of the wonderful people providing services. I began my career in human services at MARC 10 years ago as a direct care staff. Through hard work I became a leader, opening new job sites for people served and subsequent staff training. Unfortunately, owing to ongoing budget constraints, staff went more than 9 years without a single raise. I had to watch many of my friends and colleagues leave MARC for other jobs in other industries. I had to leave MARC myself after 6 years, primarily because I could no longer pay my bills absent 20 hours weekly of overtime. 60 hour work weeks breed burn out and failure to focus. My end result was perhaps more fortunate than most. I had opportunity for career growth which 3 years later landed me back at MARC in a more senior position. Upon my return to an agency I never wanted to leave I discovered most of my former coworkers still working multiple jobs to put food on their table. They are the working poor.

It's difficult to explain the bond human service personnel develop with the people they are supporting. I know what it's like to have a conversation with someone who has been labeled non-verbal or low-functioning. When you apply for this job, you're told you'll be working to teach various skills. But what they don't say is that while you're teaching someone, they'll also be teaching you. They don't tell you it will be the most amazing job you've ever had. On other days, it can be the worst. It's tough to describe on paper the emotional toll it takes. These brilliant individuals have taught me to slow down, to think, to take the time to just look around and take in all the beauty; the simple joys we are blessed to encounter every day. Let's take some time to slow down and think about what continued cuts will do to this extremely vulnerable population of citizens, their families, advocates and the industry professionals. In cold, hard terms, just to MARC Community Resources it may very well mean laying off 15 employees, that's 15 hard-working individuals that support families! It may mean cutting services to between 25 and 30 individuals. This will have substantial impact on their families or guardians employability as well. This can't continue!

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, or for additional information.

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